



# Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan

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## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN MANDATE

The State of Indiana, through Indiana Statutes, Title 36, Article 7, as amended, empowers communities to plan with the purpose of improving the health, safety, convenience, and welfare of the citizens and to plan for the future development of their communities to the end:

1. That highway systems [and street systems] be carefully planned;
2. That new communities grow only with adequate public way, utility, health, educational, and recreational facilities;
3. That the needs of agriculture, industry, and business be recognized in future growth;
4. That residential areas provide healthful surroundings for family life; and
5. That the growth of the community is commensurate with and promotive of the efficient and economical use of public funds (IC 36-7-4-201).

Indiana statutes state that communities may establish planning and zoning entities to fulfill this purpose (IC 36-7-4-201). A Plan Commission is the body responsible for maintaining the Comprehensive Plan, which is required by State law to be developed and maintained (IC 36-7-4-501).

Indiana Code 36-7-4-502 and 503 state the required and permissible contents of the Plan. The required Plan elements are listed below:

1. A statement of objectives for the future development of the jurisdiction.
2. A statement of policy for the land use development of the jurisdiction.
3. A statement of policy for the development of public ways, public places, public lands, public structures, and public utilities.

## FULFILLMENT OF THE MANDATE

Throughout the planning process and within the *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan*, all of the State of Indiana minimum requirements have been met or exceeded. Some of the highlights include:

- The *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan* reflects analysis of the community, existing land uses, development trends, land use suitability, economic feasibility, and natural land features.
- Public involvement provided guidance for this update. The input exceeded the criteria required by the State by providing several opportunities for people to share their thoughts.
- *Part 2: Comprehensive Plan Essence* in the *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan* fulfills the requirement for establishing objectives for future development and a policy for the development of public places, public land, public structures and public utilities.
- *Part 3: Land Classification Plan* in the *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan* fulfills the requirement for a land use development policy.
- *Part 4: Transportation Plan* in the *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan* fulfills the requirement for developing a public ways policy.

## PLAN OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

### Comprehensive Plan Update Objectives

The primary objectives for revising Carmel's 2020 Vision Plan are to:

- Remove outdated and irrelevant information;
- Remove objectives that have been achieved since the previous plan;
- Update information and demographics;
- Incorporate current policies and objectives;
- Consolidate studies and plans that have been prepared since the 2020 Vision Plan was adopted;
- Distill the existing binder of planning documents into a more succinct and simple document;
- Introduce language to address the trend towards redevelopment;
- Introduce language to address the trend toward sustainability; and
- Freshen the content to more accurately reflect the City's planning vision for its planning jurisdiction.

The revised plan has been given the name *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan (C3 Plan)* because it assembles the essence of each of the existing, independent plans and studies relating to comprehensive planning. Specifically, the *C3 Plan* utilizes information and plan elements from the following documents:

- Carmel's 2020 Vision Plan;
- Development Plan and Strategies, U.S. 31 Corridor;
- 96th Street Corridor Study;
- Old Meridian Task Force Report;
- Integrated Economic Development Plan;
- Amended Redevelopment Plan; and
- Interim Report for INDOT U.S. 31 Improvements.

Because the City is interested in utilizing a form-based regulatory system in the future, this plan also establishes the foundation for such a tool. The *C3 Plan* identifies where form-based regulations, hybrid regulations (balanced traditional and form-based regulation), and traditional regulations are appropriate.

As the City develops, urbanizes, and redevelops, more and more detailed planning is expected to be necessary. This plan establishes a framework for subsequent, more focused planning efforts. Instead of incorporating those plans as addenda, the *C3 Plan* has a part for easily adding the crucial elements of those plans. Additionally, a standard format is established to dictate consistency as the *C3 Plan* evolves.

### Methodology

**Initial Public Input:** The process for this update began in October of 2005 with multiple opportunities for public engagement. The planning team held meetings with the following groups:

- Carmel/Clay School Board;
- Neighborhood association presidents;
- Business leaders;
- East Carmel general public;
- Central Carmel general public;
- West Carmel general public (2 meetings);
- High school students; and
- Chamber of Commerce leadership.

**Community Study:** Once the first round of public input was complete, the consulting team focused on intensive study of the built environment and research into existing planning documents. This step included several meetings with Carmel's planning staff and leadership.

**Document Drafting:** Concurrent with studying the community, the planning team began drafting the *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan*. Immediately following the first full draft completion, the City scheduled a public open house for the public and interest groups to provide feedback about the plan.

**Plan Commission Review:** Grass Roots Review Committee: Beginning in March of 2008, the DOCS initiated formation of a group of 30 citizens to review and make comment upon the updated draft C3 Plan. The Grass Roots Review Committee is a virtual committee, not formally organized, but all involved with the full understanding of their role with other Committee members. Each member provided written feedback to DOCS, which was used to make improvements to the plan prior to re-submission to the Plan Commission.

### Implementation

A great city plan strives for successful implementation of its goal and policies. The *Carmel Clay Comprehensive Plan* contains general policies intended to guide and influence growth, development, and vitality of the City as it continues to evolve. Achieving the goals in the plan will require effort and support by residents, developers, the business community, the faith community, and government. The *C3 Plan* will be implemented by public and private investment in the city through subsequent specific ordinances, programs, zoning decisions, and actions by the Redevelopment Commission and Common Council.

## FOUR CITY DISTRICTS

### Planning for Four Unique Districts

Historically, the City of Carmel and Clay Township was a homogeneous area consisting of farms, rural residential, estate homes, small town residential and small town downtown commercial development. The construction of I-465 (1960's) and S.R. 431/Keystone (1960's), and significant upgrades to U.S. 31 (1970's) in Clay Township all led to an evolution of many types of development in the City and Township.

Today the City has an urbanizing core, an employment corridor, significant redevelopment sites, many styles of residential development and multiple commercial areas. The evolution of the City and township has also resulted in distinguishable planning districts.

To facilitate more effective planning, the City of Carmel recognizes the uniqueness of four districts; East Carmel, North Central Carmel, South Central Carmel and West Carmel (see illustration below). The district boundaries were determined by evaluating development form, physical boundaries, and public input.

Although there technically are boundaries drawn on the map between planning districts, it is not intended to be a "hard" division. Rather, the reader should view the divisions as generally conceptual, reflective of how the community has evolved over the decades, and to help organize planning policy development and to guide decision-making. Therefore, an area on the edge of one district would be evaluated independently to determine which policies best fit that area.

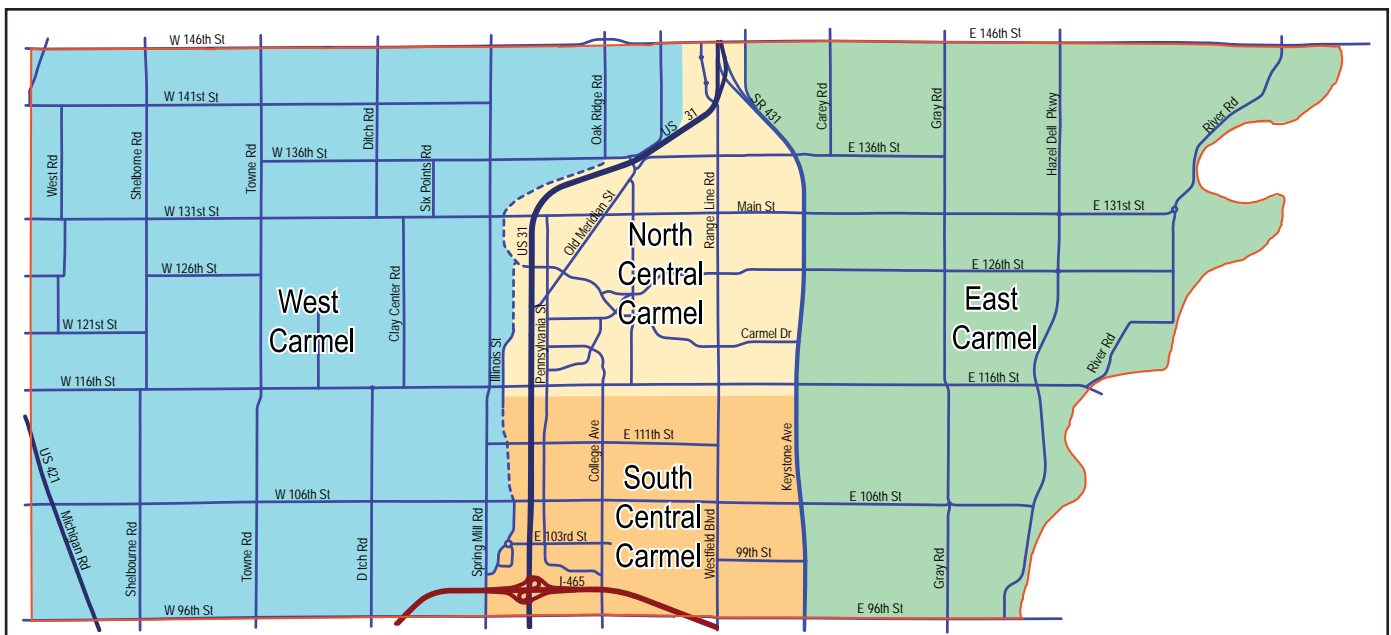
### East Carmel Characteristics

East Carmel is unique compared to the other three districts because it typifies suburbia with curvilinear streets, dominantly single-family homes, and a small number of employment or commercial developments. More specifically, the district contains a large number of neighborhoods with custom-built homes and has very little integrated commercial development. Aside from the commercial corridor along East 96th Street (the south boundary), there are two existing integrated commercial areas within this district: Brookshire Village Shoppes and Hazel Dell Corner. A third is planned within the Legacy Town Center at 146th Street and River Road. There are also three commerce centers along 146th Street just outside of Carmel, Bridgewater Shoppes, Cool Creek Commons, and Noble West.

East Carmel has a variety of recreational amenities including ten parks and an evolving river greenway. It also has three golf courses. The Carmel Dads' Club owns and operates Mark Badger Memorial Sports Park, and maintains a partnership with Carmel Schools to help meet community recreation needs.

The White River aquifer in East Carmel has provided the community with an abundance of high quality water resources; which has been effectively tapped by Carmel's water utility to serve the public need. Much of East Carmel falls within the aquifer and wellhead protection areas, designed to ensure the safety and quality of this public resource. Public and private decision making must give due consideration to this important resource.

The presence of quarry and aggregate mining operations along the White River creates the need to balance the legitimate needs of the nearby residents and the quarry as a supplier of material used for local construction.





## North Central Carmel Characteristics

North Central Carmel is clearly unique in comparison to the other districts, in that it is an urbanizing core. Although there are areas of suburban development, the district has evolved toward a more walkable vibrant downtown environment with significant mixed-use vitality, including Carmel City Center, the Arts and Design District, and the Old Meridian District.

No longer are the tallest structures two stories and suburban in character. Numerous four-story or higher buildings have been built or are in the process of being built in this district. Many new buildings are also being built to the front property line, further evolving the pedestrian character of the area.

North Central Carmel has two parks, the Monon Greenway, and one golf course; which is expected to be redeveloped in the near future (the Gramercy traditional neighborhood development). It is bordered by two dominant street corridors, U.S. 31 and Keystone Parkway, which contribute to and support the growth and vitality of this area.

The North Central Carmel district contains multiple suburban style commercial retail areas including: Merchants' Square, Clay Terrace, Kroger Plaza, and the Center.

The district also includes a wide mix of residential developments including historic residential, suburban residential, estate homes, townhouses, flats, apartments, and condominiums.

The district has significant employment areas, including a high concentration of office and health care development. The U.S. 31 Corridor and the Carmel Science and Technology Park are the main focus of employment-type development, but many other small office buildings are distributed throughout North Central Carmel. Carmel St. Vincent Hospital and Clarian North/Riley Hospital have acted to energize health care as a major industry and employer in the U.S. 31 corridor.

North Central Carmel is also home to several educational uses. The Carmel High School and Freshman Center campus along with Carmel Elementary and Carmel Clay Public Library are major educational resources along East Main Street. In addition, Clay Township's Community Life and Learning Center, operated by IUPUI and IvyTech, provides higher education opportunities in the former Carmel Clay Public Library Building. The district also contains a Middle School, private secondary school and regional facility for special needs.

## South Central Carmel Characteristics

Much of South Central Carmel's uniqueness from the other districts comes from the significant number of 1950 through 1970's style residential development and the Home Place village. The district also has intermingled areas of large-lot residential, including the homes abutting Woodland Country Club. A limited number of apartments and condominiums also exist.

The north boundary (i.e. 116th Street corridor) and areas surrounding Central Park serve as a transition from the urbanizing North Central Carmel district to quality single family residential areas. Limited bicycle and pedestrian facilities exist in this area to connect people to the amenities in North Central Carmel.

The south and west boundary includes employment areas along the I-465, U.S. 31, and 96th Street corridor. Similarly, bicycle and pedestrian facilities are lacking to convey people to these destinations.

South Central Carmel has several parks including the Monon Center, Central Park, Monon Greenway and Lenape Trace. There are two golf courses, Sunrise Golf Course and Woodland Country Club.

Despite significant park and public amenities in this area, pedestrian mobility is limited, making it difficult for people to connect with the amenities and jobs by means other than the automobile.

South Central Carmel has two strong street corridors, Westfield Boulevard and College Avenue, which provide good north/south connectivity for vehicles. Regional north/south connectivity is also provided with U.S. 31 and Keystone Parkway. Convenient east/west connectivity is limited to 106th Street and 116th Street. While not direct, 96th Street also provides connectivity between U.S. 31 and Keystone Parkway.

The South Central Carmel district has one commercial district, Home Place, and some additional pockets of commercial development along the 96th Street Corridor. Additionally, the Nora 86th Street corridor and Keystone Crossing area provide commercial amenities to South Central Carmel.

A growing restaurant and service area at U.S. 31 and 96th Street offers residents and workers in this area further options for shopping and dining.



## West Carmel Characteristics

West Carmel remains unique as an area with many rural characteristics even after the development of many suburban residential subdivisions. Historically, West Carmel was dominantly horse farms, estate homes, agricultural land, and open space. The district is still distinguished from the East Carmel district by significantly lower density residential and substantial estate homes which act to maintain open space character.

This area has a strong sense of place established from its origin as a region for estate homes and horse farms. Pride of place and rural living have characterized the values of many of the districts residents; however, as the area continues to develop, there has been more emphasis on quality infrastructure, recreational amenities (e.g. parks and trails) and ball fields (e.g. Dads' Club facilities on 126th and on Shelborne).

Although West Carmel is a larger geographic area than the other districts, it has a lower density per acre. The population in West Carmel is served by two significant public parks and two golf courses. It also is the home to one of the most well known traditional neighborhood developments in the Midwest, the Village of WestClay.

West Carmel contains the most substantial number of undeveloped acres and has the least developed road network. West Carmel continues to rely more heavily on the original county road network partly due to low density development. As this area has been annexed into Carmel, the road system has been upgraded from two-lane county roads to two-lane boulevards with multi-use paths and roundabouts at major street intersections. As the infrastructure has been improved, residents have emphasized the need for continued investment in pedestrian facilities, for improved mobility, and for health benefits.

Regional mobility is provided by two north-south highway corridors, U.S. 421 and U.S. 31. 116th Street and 146th Street function as cross-county connectors, linking I-65 to I-69, thus linking Carmel, Zionsville, and Fishers.

The West Carmel district currently has two commercial areas, Michigan Road corridor which serves as a community and regional destination, and the Village of WestClay, which functions as a local serving neighborhood commercial node. Additionally, the Town of Zionsville, 86th Street corridor and new commercial development along 146th Street near U.S. 31 are also recognized for providing commercial amenities to West Carmel residents.